



Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Human Services Committee, March 1, 2011
Testimony submitted by Lucy Potter, Attorney
Greater Hartford Legal Aid

H. B. 1042, An Act Concerning a Pilot Project under the Jobs First Employment Services Program, support

I am an attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid and have represented many clients who seek cash and medical help from DSS. I have also served on the TANF Council which has monitored the implementation of welfare reform over the years since 1996.

This bill proposes a modest but very important pilot. It would allow intensive case management for 100 families in the Jobs First program. The Pilot could assist families with what is really needed to get back to work. By paying focused attention the program can address underlying issues. Domestic violence, lack of work skills or a child with health problems and special child care needs can quickly scuttle a work situation. By addressing these issues, a parent can get and also keep a job.

It is not news to DSS or DOL or this committee that the families in the Jobs First program face these challenges. And there have been some past efforts to identify and help these families. But, overwhelmingly, TANF dollars that have come into Connecticut have been diverted to other state programs. Very little of the savings that have resulted from time limits have been reinvested in the families who are now expected to work.

We have a new administration and we are facing challenging times in our economy. It is time for a TFA program that catches people when they fall and takes the time to assess and address each family's situation, and then bolster families so the parent can truly succeed when she returns to work.

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